

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
Project HIRE success story
Washington Division of Vocational Rehabilitation—2010

Contractor's perspective

During the past year, the Thurston County Chamber Project H.I.R.E. program has strived to build a program that will not only assist DVR clients, but will also educate employers and create a long-lasting impact that can be sustained when the stimulus funding is gone. We recognize that to achieve hiring outcomes, it is imperative to fully engage and empower the businesses in our community. Our outreach efforts include informative articles in the monthly Chamber publication, workshops for employers on topics like reasonable accommodation and the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, and speakers at Chamber events.

This approach paid off when Altman Insurance, a Chamber member for over twelve years, called with the intent to hire a Project Hire participant to replace an Insurance Agent leaving their business. Rick, a Project Hire participant with a strong background in sales and account management was the perfect fit for the job. The business is happy, the client is excited about the opportunity to build a career after being unemployed for nearly two years, and Project Hire has helped both the business and the client.

Rick's sales experience and great personality helped him to beat out another top candidate with experience in the industry and the licensing required to work as an insurance agent in the state of Washington. Typically, insurance agencies require their employees to obtain training and licensing on their own. Project Hire is assisting Rick with funding for the necessary pre-licensing education, testing, and licensure fees, is funding an eight week on the job training, and assisted the employer with completing paperwork for the Work Opportunity Tax Credit. Rick recently passed the test to obtain his Property and Casualty insurance license and will begin training for his Life and Disability insurance license later this month and the employer is very happy with his progress so far.

I have quickly learned that all too often in the world of vocational rehabilitation, we hear, "What accommodations will my new employee need? What do I have to buy? What will it cost?" For me, the most rewarding moment with this placement was when the business owner asked "What can we do to make this work for him? How can we help him be productive?" This placement fit my original vision for Project Hire. We've been educating this business over the course of the past year, they came to us first with the intention of hiring a Project Hire participant, and hired an employee who beat out other candidates in an interview and is going to be a great fit. The business recognizes his value to their organization and wants to do what they can to help him be productive.